DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 295 026 CE 050 232

TITLE	Employee Drug Testing. Information on Private Sector Programs. Report to the Honorable Charles Schumer, House of Representatives.
INSTITUTION	General Accounting Office, Washington, DC. General Government Div.
REPORT NO	GAO/GGD-88-32
PUB DATE	Mar 88
NOTE	27p.
AVAILABLE FROM	U.S. General Accounting Office, P.O. Box 6015, Gaithersburg, MD 20877 (first five copies--free; additional copies--$2.00 each; 100 or more--25% discount).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Drug Abuse; *Drug Use; Employees; *Employer Attitudes; Employer Employee Relationship; *Employment Practices; Job Applicants
IDENTIFIERS	*Drug Use Testing; Private Sector

ABSTRACT

At the request of Congress, the General Accounting Office studied drug testing in the private sector to determine its extent, which testing methods are most often used, who receives drug testing and why, the reasons for having a drug testing program, and what happens to those persons who test positive. Data were obtained from 10 surveys to which a large number of corporations from a broad cross-section of the nation's private sector had responded. Some of the findings of the analysis were as follows: (1) a number of companies, though not a majority, had drug testing programs--large firms were most likely to have such programs; (2) more firms test applicants than current employees; (3) most companies used independent laboratories for urinalysis tests; (4) reasons cited for drug testing were improving workplace safety, increasing productivity, curbing illegal drug traffic, and reducing employee medical costs; (5) employers who did not test cited concerns about ethical and moral implications, reliability, and legal implications; and (6) applicants who tested positive were likely to be rejected, whereas employees who tested positive were usually referred to drug rehabilitation programs. (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED295026

United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to the Honorable Charles Schumer, House of Representatives

March 1988

EMPLOYEE DRUG TESTING

Information on Private Sector Programs

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CE050237

GAO/GGD-88-32

GAO

United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

General Government Division

B-223280

March 2, 1988

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Schumer:

In response to your January 10, 1987, request, we agreed with your office to provide a synopsis of the information contained in recently completed surveys on drug testing in the private sector. Our objective was to summarize information presented in the surveys that addressed your questions about (1) the extent of drug testing, (2) which testing methods are most often used, (3) who receives drug testing and why, (4) the reasons for having a drug testing program, and (5) what happens to those individuals who test positive.

Scope and Methodology

To identify and obtain the most recent surveys on drug testing policies and practices in the private sector, we searched 14 computerized bibliographic files and discussed our information needs with representatives of over 35 public and private organizations knowledgeable about drug testing practices. This effort identified 10 surveys from which we extracted data and summarized material relevant to your questions. The businesses responding to these 10 surveys included a large number of corporations from a broad cross section of the nation's private sector. The data from these surveys, which are reasonably current, reflect the reported practices of these specific firms. Of the 10 surveys, 5 were published in 1987, 4 in 1986, and 1 in 1985.

Because of certain limitations of these surveys, however, it should be recognized that the information in them and in this report is neither statistically representative of the nation's businesses nor, in most instances, projectable to the population of businesses surveyed. These limitations include low response rates and selective samples that were not intended to be representative of the universe of the nation's businesses. Nonetheless, we view the surveys, when considered collectively, as a source of useful information on the subject.

Details on the characteristics of the surveys and our methodology are provided in appendixes I and II. Appendix III contains our detailed analysis, which is based on the information contained in the survey reports. We did not obtain data on individual respondents in these surveys or conduct our own survey. We found it useful, in some instances, to

instances, to recompute percentages using as a standard base the number of firms reporting that they performed drug testing.

The following paragraphs provide summary observations on the principal questions you raised about drug testing, as practiced by the firms responding to the surveys.

The Extent of Drug Testing

The 10 surveys show that a number of the responding companies, though not a majority, had drug testing programs. Of these companies, firms with large numbers of employees were more likely to have such programs. For example, one survey of the Fortune 100 firms reported that one-half of the firms conducted some type of employee drug testing. The 1987 Fortune 100 firms collectively employed about 8.5 million people. The surveys also suggest that drug testing may become more common in the future because a number of responding firms that did not currently test said they planned to do so in the foreseeable future.

Who Receives Testing and Why

Nine of the 10 surveys presented separate figures for the percent of firms that test employees and the percent of firms that test applicants. Eight of the nine surveys showed that more firms test job applicants than test current employees. In all 10 surveys, firms that tested employees were more likely to test under certain circumstances, such as after an accident. To a lesser extent, firms used random or periodic testing for employees. All six of the surveys that reported on the types of applicants tested indicated that it was more common for firms that tested applicants to test all applicants. No specific figures were presented in the survey data concerning the number of employees or applicants subject to drug testing.

Which Testing Methods Are Used Most Often

In the three surveys that asked about who performed the drug testing, most firms reported using independent laboratories. Five surveys inquired about the methodology used to test for drugs. Although several methodologies (e.g., urine testing, blood testing, hair testing) exist for detecting drug use, the majority of survey respondents in all five surveys reported urinalysis as the drug testing method they used.

Seven surveys addressed the question of confirming initial positive tests with a second test. In almost every survey, the majority of firms said they performed some kind of retest on individuals who initially tested positive. However, it was not a universal practice. Some firms reported

that they did not retest. It also appears that this practice was less common with respect to applicants than employees. In two of the three surveys that specifically reported on retesting of applicants, less than half of the firms indicated that they provided follow-up testing for job applicants who failed an initial test.

The most frequently reported practice was to retest with some other type of urine test than that used initially, according to the five surveys that provided this information. One retesting practice was to use a confirmatory test more sophisticated than the initial test. However, it was not unusual for an employer to use the same urine test for a retest.

Reasons for Having Drug Testing Programs

Five surveys noted respondents' reasons for having a drug testing program. Among the reasons often cited for drug testing were improving workplace safety, increasing productivity, curbing illegal drug traffic, and reducing employee medical costs. Those firms that did not test generally cited concerns about the ethical and moral implications of the drug testing process, its reliability, and its cost. Also noted were employee opposition, legal implications, and some doubts among a few responding firms that if an employee took drugs, and the test showed that drugs were present in the body, it would not necessarily indicate job impairment.

What Happens to Those Individuals Testing Positive

Firms reported that they treated job applicants who failed drug testing differently from employees who failed such testing. In the seven surveys that asked about the various actions taken when an applicant tested positive for drugs, the majority of firms reported that they would not hire job applicants who failed drug testing. There were more firms that said they would tell these applicants why they were not being hired than firms that would not explain the reason for rejection.

In contrast, the five surveys asking about employees who tested positive showed that, across all five surveys, the majority of firms referred employees to drug rehabilitation programs. Firms did not necessarily dismiss employees who failed the test.

As arranged with your office, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days from the date of the report unless you publicly announce its contents earlier. After that time, we will send copies to interested parties and make copies available to others upon request. If

you have any further questions, please contact Richard Caradine on 275-3532, or me on 275-8676.

Sincerely yours,

L. Nye Stevens

L. Nye Stevens
Associate Director

Contents

Letter 1

Appendix I
Summary Descriptions of the Surveys We Reviewed 10

Survey I: American Management Association Research Study: Drug Abuse - The Workplace Issues. 1987. 10

Survey II: Telephone Survey from American Management Association Research Study: Drug Abuse - The Workplace Issues. 1987. 11

Survey III: American Society of Personnel Administration Newsletter: Resource: Workplace Drug Testing Up; Further Increases Are Likely. February 1987. 11

Survey IV: Business & Legal Reports: 1987 Survey of Drug Testing in the Workplace. July 1987. 11

Survey V: Business Roundtable: Position regarding Drug Abuse. November 17, 1986. 12

Survey VI: College Placement Council: Preemployment Drug Screening; A Survey of Practices Among National Employers of College Graduates: November 1986. 12

Survey VII: CompuChem Laboratories, Inc.: Drug Testing in Major U. S. Corporations; A Survey of the Fortune 500. 1985. 14

Survey VIII: Employment Management Association (EMA) Journal: Extent of Alcohol/Drug Testing Programs in the Workplace. Winter 1987 issue. 15

Survey IX: Human Resources Research: Substance Abuse in Organizations 1971 - 1986; Realities — Trends — Reactions. January 1987 15

Survey X: Northwestern Endicott-Lindquist Report 1987: Employment Trends for College Graduates in Business. November through December 1986. 16

Appendix II
Objectives, Scope, and Methodology and Limitations on the Use of the Information in the Surveys 17

Limitations on the Use of Information in the Surveys 18

Appendix III Detailed Information on Drug Testing Practices

20
Extent of Drug Testing 20
Who Receives Drug Testing and Why? 21
How the Drug Testing Process Works 22

Tables

Table I.1: Industry Affiliation of Survey I Respondents 10
Table I.2: Organizational Size of Survey I Respondents as Measured by Number of Employees 10
Table I.3: Organizational Size of Survey III Respondents as Measured by Number of Employees 11
Table I.4: Industry Affiliation of Survey IV Respondents 12
Table I.5: Organizational Size of Survey IV Respondents as Measured by Number of Employees 12
Table I.6: Industry Affiliation of Survey VI Respondents 13
Table I.7: Organizational Size of Survey VI Respondents as Measured by Number of Employees 13
Table I.7: Industry Affiliation of Survey VII Respondents 14
Table I.8: Industry Affiliation of Survey IX Respondents 15
Table I.9: Organizational Size of Survey IX Respondents as Measured by Number of Employees 15
Table I.10: Industry Affiliation of Survey X Respondents 16
Table III.1: Percent of Firms That Drug Test by Survey 20
Table III.2: Size of Firms That Drug Test Employees by Survey 21
Table III.3: Percent of Firms Testing Applicants by Applicant Category and Survey 22
Table III.4: Percent of Firms Testing Employees by Testing Circumstances 22
Table III.5: Percent of Firms Using Various Methods for Drug Testing Employees or Applicants by Survey 23
Table III.6: Percent of Firms in Each Survey Retesting Applicants and Employees With Positive Results 24
Table III.7: Percent of Firms Taking Various Actions If an Employee Tests Positive for Drugs by Survey 25
Table III.8: Percent of Firms Taking Various Actions If an Applicant Tests Positive for Drugs by Survey 25

Abbreviations

ABI/Inform	Computerized bibliographic database produced by Data Courier Incorporated
AMA	American Management Association
ASI	American Standard Index computerized bibliographic database
ASPA	American Society of Personnel Administration
BLR	Business and Legal Reports
BRT	Business Roundtable
CIS	Congressional Information Service computerized bibliographic database
CITN	Citation, a Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress computerized bibliographic database
CPC	College Placement Council
EMA	Employment Management Association
ERIC	Education Resources Information Center computerized bibliographic database
FCC	Far Cliffs Consulting
GAO	U.S. General Accounting Office
NTIS	National Technical Information Service computerized bibliographic database
PAIS	Public Affairs Information Service computerized bibliographic database

Summary Descriptions of the Surveys We Reviewed

Survey I: American Management Association Research Study: Drug Abuse - The Workplace Issues. 1987.

This American Management Association (AMA) study included data from a mail-out questionnaire and a telephone survey. Because the surveys were directed to different business populations and did not use the same questions or methodology, they are treated separately in this report. (See Survey II for a description of the telephone survey.)

The mail-out questionnaire, identified as Survey I in this report, addressed drug testing and rehabilitation. It was sent to 10,000 human resources directors on AMA's membership lists and subscribers to the AMA human resources publication, Personnel. Responses were received from 1090 individuals or approximately 11 percent of those contacted.

The reported industry affiliation of the respondents is provided in table I.1.

Table I.1: Industry Affiliation of Survey I Respondents

Manufacturing-Industrial Goods	15%	Healthcare	10%
Manufacturing-Consumer Goods	10%	Government	7%
Banking/Finance	6%	Electronics	4%
Trade (Wholesale/Retail)	4%	Education	4%
Food Processing/Agribusiness	3%	Professional Services	4%
Communications/Publishing	3%	Insurance	3%
Transportation/Distribution	3%	Utilities	2%
Entertainment/Lodging	2%	Mineral Extraction	1%
Diversified Conglomerate	2%	All Others	15%

Note: Figures do not add to 100% due to rounding.

The percentage of respondents from different size organizations as measured by the number of employees is listed in table I.2.

Table I.2: Organizational Size of Survey I Respondents as Measured by Number of Employees

Fewer than 500	16%
500 - 2,499	31%
2,500 - 4,999	8%
5,000 and over	14%
Not provided	31%

Survey II: Telephone Survey from American Management Association Research Study: Drug Abuse - The Workplace Issues. 1987.

This telephone survey of the corporate headquarters of the 100 largest U.S. industrial companies was performed in conjunction with Survey I. All questions pertained to drug testing and were open-ended. Specific figures were not generally reported.

Survey III: American Society of Personnel Administration Newsletter: Resource: Workplace Drug Testing Up; Further Increases Are Likely. February 1987.

The American Society of Personnel Administration (ASPA) conducted this survey, which was published as a news article in the February issue of Resource, its monthly newsletter. The topic, employer screening practices, included questions on drug testing. The questionnaire was attached to the November 1986 issue of the newsletter, which has a circulation of 35,000, and 226 firms responded, about 0.6 percent of the total circulation. The type of industry represented by the respondent firms was not stated.

The percentage of respondents from different size organizations as measured by the number of employees is described in table I.3.

Table I.3: Organizational Size of Survey III Respondents as Measured by the Number of Employees

0 - 500	54%
501 - 1,000	15%
1,001 - 2,500	14%
Over 2,500	17%

Survey IV: Business & Legal Reports: 1987 Survey of Drug Testing in the Workplace. July 1987.

The survey was done by the Business & Legal Reports (BLR), Bureau of Law & Business, Inc. and sponsored by ASPA. According to a BLR representative, questionnaires were sent to 13,000 subscribers of the Business & Legal Reports, and 1,976 responses, or about 15 percent of total circulation, were received prior to the cut-off date and used for the report.

The reported industry affiliation of the respondent firms and percentages is provided in table I.4.

Table I.4: Industry Affiliation of Survey IV Respondents

Manufacturing	40%
Insurance/Finance/Services	19%
Health/Education	12%
Communications/Electronics	3%
Retailing	3%
Civil Service (Government)	2%
Transportation	1%
Other	21%

Note: Figures do not add to 100% due to rounding.

The percentage of respondents from different size organizations as measured by the number of employees is seen in table I.5.

Table I.5: Organizational Size of Survey IV Respondents as Measured by Number of Employees

100 or fewer	26%
101 - 500	46%
Over 500	28%

Survey V: Business Roundtable: Position regarding Drug Abuse. November 17, 1986.

This survey was done by the Business Roundtable (BRT). The questionnaire on drug abuse consisted of four items. Two of the items asked about drug testing, and the other two items asked about the provision of drug abuse education and employee assistance programs. BRT surveyed its 192 member companies, which are, according to the BRT, among the 200 largest manufacturing and financial companies in the United States, and 148 (77 percent) responses were received. The type of industry of the responding firms was not stated.

Survey VI: College Placement Council: Preemployment Drug Screening; A Survey of Practices Among National Employers of College Graduates: November 1986.

The College Placement Council (CPC) did this survey for use by employer members of CPC. The purpose was to learn more about current drug screening practices among employers of college graduates. Questionnaires were mailed to 1199 CPC employer members and 497, or about 42 percent, responses were received.

The reported industry affiliation of the respondent firms is seen in table I.6.

Table I.6: Industry Affiliation of Survey VI Respondents

Public Utilities (Including Transportation)	15%
Banking/Finance/Insurance	11%
Electrical/Electronics	10%
Merchandising Services (Retail/Wholesale)	9%
Research/Consulting	8%
Chemicals/Drugs/Allied Products	7%
Aerospace	6%
Petroleum/Natural Gas/Allied Products	5%
Computers/Business Machines	5%
Glass/Paper/Packaging/Allied Products	4%
Metals/Metal Products	4%
Automotive/Mechanical Equipment	3%
Federal/State/Local Government Agencies	3%
Other	7%
Not Provided	4%

Note: Figures do not add to 100% due to rounding.

With very few exceptions, the distribution of the respondents by primary industrial classification reflected the overall CPC employee membership.

The percentage of respondents from different size organizations as measured by the number of employees is provided in table I.7.

Table I.7: Organizational Size of Survey VI Respondents as Measured by Number of Employees

1 - 250	3%
251 - 1,000	13%
1,001 - 5,000	38%
More than 5,000	44%
Not Provided	3%

Note: Figures do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Survey VII: CompuChem Laboratories, Inc.: Drug Testing in Major U. S. Corporations; A Survey of the Fortune 500. 1985.

CompuChem Laboratories, Inc. commissioned this telephone survey, which was performed by Noel Dunivant and Associates. The survey was based on a stratified, random sample of 180 companies from the 1984 Fortune 500 Industrial and 1984 Fortune 500 Service companies. All 180 sampled companies responded.

Because many of the questions were directed to respondents from corporations that had implemented drug testing programs, certain groups (e.g., utilities) were oversampled to increase the likelihood of reaching companies with program experience. Accordingly, responses were weighted to adjust for the disproportionate sampling.

The organizational size of the responding firms, as measured by the number of employees, was not stated except that it was noted that only firms with over 1000 employees were included in the sample. The percentage of respondent firms from different industry types reported by the survey is described in table I.7.

Table I.7: Industry Affiliation of Survey VII Respondents

Industrial - Large	22%
Industrial - Medium	22%
Industrial - Small	22%
Service - Transportation	9%
Service - Utilities	7%
Service - Diversified Service	6%
Service - Banks, Financial Service	6%
Service - Retail	3%
Service - Life Insurance	3%

Survey VIII: Employment Management Association (EMA) Journal: Extent of Alcohol/Drug Testing Programs in the Workplace. Winter 1987 issue.

This survey was done by the Employment Management Association (EMA) in October 1986 and published as an article in the EMA Journal, Winter 1987. Questionnaires were sent to 2,900 (1,400 EMA members and 1,500 nonmembers) human resource professionals of the nation's largest business organizations, and responses were received from 492, or about 17 percent of those contacted.

The survey did not note the type of industry and organizational size profiles of the respondent firms.

Survey IX: Human Resources Research: Substance Abuse in Organizations 1971 - 1986; Realities —- Trends —- Reactions: January 1987

The Human Resources Research division of Far Cliffs Consulting (FCC) performed this survey on substance abuse in organizations. The questionnaire included a section on drug testing. According to an FCC representative, three hundred questionnaires were sent to national companies, organizations hiring primarily high school and college age employees, firms in the midwest, and a sample of smaller organizations. Responses were received from 60 (20 percent) of those contacted.

The reported industry affiliation of the respondent firms is seen in table I.8.

Table I.8: Industry Affiliation of Survey IX Respondents

Manufacturing	46%	Paper	4%
Food Processing	7%	Insurance	2%
Petroleum	5%	Service	2%
Retailing	5%	Health Care	2%
Electronics	4%	Civil Service	2%
Education	4%	Other	17%

The percentage of respondent firms from different size organizations as measured by the number of employees is described in table I.9.

Table I.9: Organizational Size of Survey IX Respondents as Measured by Number of Employees

1 - 100	9%
101 - 2,000	20%
Over 2,000	71%

Survey X: Northwestern Endicott-Lindquist Report 1987: Employment Trends for College Graduates in Business. November through December 1986.

The Northwestern University Placement Center conducted this study which is an annual survey of policy and personnel practices related to the employment of college graduates across the spectrum of business and industry. The survey included a section on practices related to drug testing. According to a Northwestern University representative, questionnaires were sent to 460 firms that actively recruited new college graduates, and 230 (50 percent) responses were received. The organizational size of the responding firms was not mentioned.

The reported industry affiliation of the responding firms is described in table I.10.

Table I.10: Industry Affiliation of Survey X Respondents

Chemical, Drug, and Rubber	12%
Banking, Finance, and Insurance	11%
Electrical and Electronics	10%
Merchandising and Services	9%
Public Utilities	9%
Metals and Metal Products	7%
Petroleum and Natural Gas	5%
Automotive and Mechanical	5%
Food and Beverage Processing	5%
Public Accounting	5%
Glass, Paper, and Packaging	4%
Aerospace	4%
Computers and Business Equip.	4%
Building Material and Const.	3%
Transportation	3%
Research and Consulting	3%
Miscellaneous	1%

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology and Limitations on the Use of the Information in the Surveys

In response to your January 10, 1987, request, we agreed to obtain, analyze, and summarize information from recent surveys on private sector drug testing. Our objective was to summarize information presented in the surveys that addressed questions about (1) the extent of drug testing, (2) which testing methods are most often used, (3) who receives drug testing and why, (4) the reasons for having a drug testing program, and (5) what happens to those individuals who test positive.

We obtained our information through searches of 14 computerized bibliographic files[1] and discussions with staff at the National Institute of Drug Abuse, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the White House Office of Drug Abuse Policy, the Department of Defense, the Office of Technology Assessment, 12 survey research firms, and 14 trade, business, and professional associations and societies.

We identified 12 surveys with items on drug testing; however, we used only 10 in our review. We eliminated one survey conducted by Michigan State University because the question response categories used in this survey were so different from the response categories used in the other surveys that information on drug testing could not be summarized in the same format as the other surveys. Another survey conducted by faculty at Indiana University of Pennsylvania was not completed in time for our report.

Because the focus of the request concerned the practices of those companies that performed drug testing, we considered the number of firms reporting that they performed drug testing the standard base for computing percentages on questions about the programs. Across the surveys, however, percentages were not always computed using this base. If a percentage was not computed on this basis, we recalculated percentages using this standard base whenever possible in order to adjust for this inconsistency and provide a more uniform approach to the presentation of the data.

[1]CITN, Health and Planning Administration, Nursing and Allied Health, Sport, Medline, ASI, NTIS, PAIS, Social Scisearch, ERIC, Psych Info, Sociological Abstracts, CIS, and ABI/Inform.

Limitations on the Use of Information in the Surveys

We believe that the 10 surveys we reviewed collectively constitute a valuable source of information about private sector drug testing programs.[2] A large number of corporations reflecting a broad cross section of the nation's businesses participated. However, several methodological points must be made concerning the use and interpretation of data from the surveys.

The prevailing practice in the surveys we reviewed was to refer to the figures presented as the percentage of firms or businesses responding to an item. In presenting our summary, we follow the same practice. It cannot be assumed, however, that only one respondent per company completed the survey instruments that were mailed out. We did not find any discussion of data screening or editing procedures that were performed to eliminate or adjust for this possibility in the surveys we reviewed. The possibility exists that a particular firm's practices are counted more than once in the same survey, especially when the survey instrument was included as a supplement to a publication.

The figures obtained are only indicative of the drug testing practices followed by the firms that responded. In all 10 surveys, the businesses responding came from membership lists of various types, which even taken as a whole, are not representative of the population of businesses nationwide. In some cases, inclusion on a list was based on subscribing to a publication of the organization conducting the survey, or being a participant in a previous survey. In other cases, it was because firms were identified as Fortune 100, Fortune 500, or Fortune 1000 corporations.

None of the mail-out surveys reported conducting any follow-up efforts to increase response rates or to assess how well those responding compared to those that did not. Consequently, there is no basis for assuming that the information of those businesses that did not respond is the same as those that did. And, since those not returning the questionnaires range from approximately 20 percent to 99 percent, it should not be assumed, in a statistical sense, that those businesses responding are representative of the group surveyed.

Other considerations that could affect the survey information are the varied questionnaire designs, the topics addressed, the wording of questions and response categories, and the data analysis. These differences

[2]Four studies also included results from governmental agencies. These represented 2 to 7 percent of a study's respondents.

constitute potential sources of bias that could also influence the survey results.

Because these sources of bias may exist and the possibility that the same firm responded to two or more surveys, the figures presented from the different surveys on a particular topic should not be considered directly comparable or statistically averaged, even if weighted by number of respondents.

Detailed Information on Drug Testing Practices

This appendix presents data and observations from the 10 surveys we reviewed on the extent of drug testing, who receives drug testing and why, and how the drug testing program works. Not every survey addressed each of these topics. Only those surveys that had useable information addressing the particular topic under discussion are included in the sections that follow.

Extent of Drug Testing

As indicated in Table III.1, all 10 surveys provided information on the extent of employee drug testing programs. In addition, most surveys differentiated between programs for employees and those for applicants.

With the exception of the figures from Survey II and Survey V, the results shown in Table III.1 indicate that the majority of firms responding to the surveys do not test. Survey II and V surveyed some of the nation's largest companies and in these two surveys roughly half the respondents indicated that they did have drug testing programs. Firms were more likely to test applicants than employees.

The surveys indicated that a number of firms that were not testing at the time of the survey were planning to drug test. Survey IV stated that if the trend toward drug testing continues, drug users may gravitate to those organizations known not to test and that other employers will have to follow suit as a matter of self-protection.

Table III.1: Percent of Firms That Drug Test by Survey

Survey	Employees	Applicants	Planned To Test[a]
I	16	20	12
II	50	50	•
III	18	25	•
IV	9	15	3
V	48	55	7 E 12 A
VI	14	28	20
VII	•	14	7
VIII	21	29	16
IX	42	45	4 E
X	11	b	19 A

[a]Surveys I, IV, VI, VII, VIII did not distinguish between the employee/applicant category. The letter E denotes current employees and the letter A indicates applicants.

[b]Survey data indicated that at least 22 percent of the responding firms had programs that were restricted to testing only applicants. The total percentage of firms that tested applicants may be somewhat higher since firms that tested both applicants and employees were not included.

Survey IV noted that larger organizations were more likely to drug test. In addition to our observation from Table III.1 that surveys reporting the highest percent of drug testing questioned the nation's largest firms, further support for this statement can be found in other surveys. The four surveys that detailed drug testing by the size of reporting organization, as shown in Table III.2, are consistent in showing that a greater percent of the largest firms test.

Table III.2: Size of Firms That Drug Test Employees by Survey

Survey	Number of Employees	Percent Testing
I	Fewer than 500	16
	500 to 2,499	23
	2,500 to 4,999	21
	5,000 or more	36
IV	Fewer than 100	3
	101 to 500	7
	501 or more	17
VI	Fewer than 250	7
	251 to 1,000	8
	1,001 to 5,000	26
	5,001 or more	38
IX	Fewer than 100	20
	101 to 2,000	18
	2,001 or more	51

Who Receives Drug Testing and Why?

All 10 surveys included information on when current or prospective employees would be tested, and under what conditions this would happen. However, only five surveys provided specific reasons for establishing drug testing programs. The reasons cited included improving workplace safety and productivity, helping employees with their drug problems, curbing illegal drug traffic, reducing employee medical costs, and complying with government regulations. As indicated in Table III.1, more companies tested applicants than employees, possibly, as Survey I noted, because they do not perceive any legal restrictions against preemployment testing.

Table III.3 presents data from those surveys that inquired about what types of applicants are tested. For those companies that tested, the majority indicated that they tested nearly all applicants, regardless of the level or type employment sought. Three of the surveys specifically mentioned including management or executive, professional, clerical or technical, and wage level applicants. Additionally, it appears that very few firms singled out for testing applicants for selected jobs such as

those involving safety or where safety is critical, such as heavy equipment operators.

Table III.3: Percent of Firms Testing Applicants by Applicant Category and Survey

Applicant Category	Survey[a] I	V[b]	VI	VII	VIII
All prospective employees	79	Most	94	80	90
Selected jobs only (e.g., jobs involving safety)	15	•	•	•	2

[a]Survey IV indicated that, on average, 85 percent of the responding firms tested all applicants across various applicant categories (e.g., managerial, supervisory, clerical, line worker).

[b]Specific percentages were not provided. The general responses as given are noted.

As noted in Table III.4, among firms that tested employees, testing for cause, such as after an accident, was the most prevalent reason cited for testing, possibly, as Survey I suggested, because it is less controversial and has support in the courts. This survey also noted the importance of the supervisor's judgment in referring an employee for testing. The firm faces third party liability if a drug-impaired employee causes personal injury or property damage, and the employee can sue the firm for invasion of privacy if the drug testing is found unreasonable. Survey VIII noted that some companies begin their testing programs with applicants, phasing in employee testing at a later date.

Table III.4: Percent of Firms Testing Employees by Testing Circumstances

Circumstance	Survey I	II	III	IV	V[a]	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
"For cause"	100	100	83	70	Most	87	47	100	72	58
Selected jobs	38	•	•	•	Most	34	•	•	•	•
Random test	12	b	10	12	Some	23	13	12	13	•
Annual physical	•	•	•	•	•	•	19	24	•	•
Periodic test	15	b	•	•	•	13	•	9	•	•
All employees	•	•	7	•	•	•	•	•	•	25[c]

[a]Specific percentages were not provided. The general responses as given are noted.

[b]Twenty four percent of the firms performed random or periodic tests. The survey did not report data for each test separately.

[c]Percent of firms responding included firms planning to test.

How the Drug Testing Process Works

Once an employer decides to drug test, several issues mentioned in the surveys as important are: 1) the methods of testing, 2) the confirmation of initial positive drug tests, 3) the administration of the drug-testing

program, 4) the actions taken if an employee's drug test is positive, and 5) the consequences to an employee who refuses a drug test.

Drug Testing Methods

Table III.5 presents data from those surveys that inquired about the methods survey recipients used to test for drugs. These surveys indicated that urinalysis was the most common method of testing. Some firms used blood testing, but much less frequently than urinalysis.

Survey VIII also included figures on respondents who specified a particular type of urinalysis test. For these respondents, one of the most frequently mentioned type of urine test for an initial or routine screen was the enzyme-linked immunoassay test (43.7%). Also mentioned were radioimmunoassay (11.7%), and thin layer chromatography (9.7%).

Table III.5: Percent of Firms Using Various Methods for Drug Testing Employees or Applicants by Survey

	Survey[a]			
	IV[b]	V[c]	VII	VIII
Methods				
Applicants				
Urine Test	83	All	97	99
Blood Test	9	•	•	27
Other	1	•	•	•
Employees				
Urine Test	78	All	•	•
Blood Test	23	Few	•	•
Other	4	•	•	•

[a]Survey IX provided data on the drug testing program but did not distinguish between applicant and employee testing. Figures were urine test (97 percent), polygraph (69 percent), and other (5 percent).

[b]Figures represent average number of firms responding across various job categories (e.g., managerial, supervisory, clerical, line worker).

[c]Specific percentages were not provided. The general responses as given are noted.

Confirming Initial Positive Tests

As indicated in Table III.6, retesting of positive drug tests was common. More firms retested using some other type of urinalysis test, but it was not unusual for a firm to use the same type of test. The other confirming tests included some that were more sophisticated, such as one of several chromatography urine tests. However, performing a confirmatory retest was far from a universal practice as there were firms in Survey IV and VI that reported they did not retest. Survey VI showed that more than half of the firms did not retest applicants who tested positive.

Table III.6: Percent of Firms in Each Survey Retesting Applicants and Employees With Positive Results

	Survey[a]						
	I	II	III	IV	VI	IX[b]	X
Retest with some other confirming test	90	100	72 A 71 E	42 E	•	32 E	•
Retest with same type test	8 E	•	•	21 E	•	12 E	•
Retest—type not specified	•	•	•	43 A[c]	38 A	•	76 E
No retest	•	•	•	20 E	57 A	•	•

[a]The letter E denotes current employees and the letter A indicates applicants. For some figures in survey I and II, it was not stated whether the figures applied to applicants or employees.

[b]If a current employee denied taking drugs.

[c]Figures represent average number of firms reporting results of retests across various job categories (e.g., managerial, supervisory, clerical, line worker).

Administering the Testing Program

Three surveys provided information on who administers drug testing programs. Survey V presented no figures but stated that most companies used independent laboratories for applicant drug testing. Survey VI reported that 84 percent of its responding employers who have preemployment drug screening programs used independent labs for urinalysis testing, while 13 percent used in-house medical departments. In Survey IV, 60 percent of the respondents who tested employees reported using outside organizations while 19 percent reported that the test was done by their own staff.

Three surveys indirectly addressed the issue of drug test accuracy. Survey IV noted that fewer than half of those who tested positive on the first test also tested positive on the second test. Survey II noted that several firms in their survey changed laboratories because of problems and 6 percent of the firms responding to Survey I cited concern with inaccurate testing as one reason for not drug-testing employees.

A written drug testing policy can provide guidelines to management and supervisory personnel for handling of employees suspected of using drugs and inform employees of the company's philosophy and procedures for dealing with drug use. Survey I asked companies engaging in drug testing if they had a written policy on drug testing. While the majority of firms responded that they had either a written policy or were in the process of writing one, 14 percent of the respondents who test for drugs indicated that they had no written policy or plans to develop one.

The Actions Taken If an Employee's Drug Test Is Positive

The five surveys presented in Table III.7 indicate a preference for rehabilitating drug using employees rather than dismissing them. Firms in Surveys I and VIII noted that the choice of actions or combination of actions would be determined on a case-by-case basis for employees who tested positive. Some of the things they considered were the person's position and the type of work involved, the occurrence and severity of an accident or other incident, and the employee's past record and willingness to undergo rehabilitation. Survey VIII also stated that termination is often the final outcome, but warnings or suspensions were also frequent alternatives, particularly for the first offense.

Table III.7: Percent of Firms Taking Various Actions If an Employee Tests Positive for Drugs by Survey

	Survey				
Action[a]	I	IV	VIII	IX	X
Refer to rehabilitative program	67	52	89	64	89
Dismiss Employee	8	20	86	4	24
Suspension	•	•	73	•	•
Issue warning	•	8	55	•	•
Follow normal discipline system	•	28	•	•	•

[a]More than one action could be checked by respondents.

Actions that organizations may take if an applicant tests positive for drugs are presented in Table III.8. These surveys indicate that most firms rejected applicants testing positive for drugs. However, some firms permit the individual to reapply, and some firms do hire applicants who fail drug testing.

Table III.8: Percent of Firms Taking Various Actions If an Applicant Tests Positive for Drugs by Survey

	Survey						
Action	I[c]	III	IV	V[c]	VI	VIII	IX
Reject candidate	Vast	•	66	Most	89	90	83
Do not refuse employment[a]	Some	•	•	•	4	5	16
Allow reapplication later[b]	Some	30	•	Some	75	79	•

[a]Includes hiring of applicant with warning, or on probationary status (e.g., conditional on completion of rehabilitation program).

[b]Reapplication may be contingent on such factors as the elapsing of a specified period of time, a negative retest, or evidence of rehabilitation.

[c]Specific percentages for each category were not provided. The general responses as given are noted.

Surveys I, IV, VIII, and IX had items that addressed telling or not telling applicants testing positive the reason for not hiring them. While the percentage of respondents who reported telling the applicant the reason for not being hired was greater in each survey than the percentage of respondents not telling the applicant, 25 percent of the respondents in Survey I, 22 percent in Survey IV, 18 percent in Survey IX, and 2 percent in Survey VIII did not tell the applicant the reason for the rejection.

What Happens to an Employee Refusing a Drug Test?

The following is the only detailed information we found on the disciplinary actions firms take when an employee refused drug testing. In Survey IV, 29 percent of the respondents reported they disciplined those employees for insubordination, 21 percent used some other discipline procedure, 21 percent treated the employee as if test results were positive, and 3 percent took no action.

Survey VIII provided a number of possible actions that may be taken if an employee refused a drug test. Among the responding firms, 42 percent took disciplinary action up to and including termination, 45 percent terminated the employee, 11 percent suspended the employee, and 4 percent referred the individual for rehabilitation. Sick leave, transfer to less critical jobs, and referral to medical care were chosen by 1 percent of the firms. In this same survey, 99 percent of the respondents did not hire applicants who refused drug testing. Survey I noted that the vast majority of firms would not consider an applicant if the candidate refused drug testing.

Requests for copies of GAO reports should be sent to:

U.S. General Accounting Office
Post Office Box 6015
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877

Telephone 202-275-6241

The first five copies of each report are free. Additional copies are $2.00 each.

There is a 25% discount on orders for 100 or more copies mailed to a single address.

Orders must be prepaid by cash or by check or money order made out to the Superintendent of Documents.